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EEB/TPP/MTAA/ABT FOR MSZYMANSKI AND JBOBO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: ENRG EAGR ECON PGOV TBIO KPAO CO

SUBJECT: BOGOTA PROPOSAL FOR BIOTECHNOLOGY SPEAKER ON NEXT GENERATION BIOFUELS

REF: A. STATE 129940

B. 08 BOGOTA 4353

¶11. (U) SUMMARY: Post requests that EEB fund a Spanish-speaking U.S. expert on development of second generation biofuels, focusing on trends in the biotechnology sector and how biofuels producers can prepare for the shift from current production technology to the next generation. While Colombia has become a regional leader in the production of first generation biofuels for job creation, domestic energy diversification and emissions reduction, private sector producers and government policymakers have not focused on oncoming technology trends. The goal of the outreach is to focus the attention of producers, policymakers, and researchers to examine the benefits of biotechnology in preparing Colombia to sustainably modernize its biofuels sector in the coming years. This speaker program would support USG economic and clean energy development objectives, including those outlined in the September 18, 2008, U.S.-Colombia Memorandum of Understanding to Advance Cooperation on Renewable and Clean Energy signed by Secretary Rice. Upon approval, Post will work on identifying a specific speaker candidate in coordination with the Department. END SUMMARY.

¶12. (U) STATEMENT OF PROBLEM: By instituting aggressive tax incentives and transportation fuel blending mandates, Colombia has created a favorable investment climate for biofuels production and become a regional leader in producing ethanol and biodiesel for domestic transportation consumption and emissions reduction. Sugar-based ethanol and palm oil-based biodiesel production have expanded rapidly in recent years and are expected to supply ten percent of Colombia's transportation fuel needs by 2010. Accordingly, the industry is currently at the forefront of generating alternative rural employment to illegal coca production and armed insurgency. Nevertheless, Colombia is approaching limits on available land for sugar production and navigating environmental and social concerns in its expansion of palm-growing areas (ref B). Likewise, Colombia possesses enormous amounts of unused biomass waste from its large coffee, banana and sugar industries that could be utilized for energy production. To position its growing, but still nascent, biofuels industry for continued job creation while balancing land use issues, Colombian biofuels producers need to begin focusing on how to use biotechnology and new production trends to capture the efficiencies and sustainability gains expected through second generation biofuels technology.

¶13. (U) COST: Program would be supported wholly from EEB funds. Estimated cost of this program is USD 5,750 which will include transportation, lodging, and interpretation (if needed) as follows:

Transport: USD 2,000 (R/T US-Bogota)
Local Travel (R/T most likely to Cali): USD 750
Per diem (3 program and 2 travel days): USD 1,250

Interpretation (USD 500/day): USD 1,500 (as needed)
Miscellaneous: (Meeting Room/invitations): USD 250

¶4. (U) TIME FRAME: Given impending summer turnover, Post would like to arrange for speaker in April or May of 2009 before projected staffing gaps arise.

¶5. (U) MISSION STRATEGIC PLAN THEME AND PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM: This program meets Post's FY 2009 MSP goal of "Promoting Economic Growth and Security" by helping to sustainably develop Colombia's agriculture and energy sectors as sources of legitimate employment and alternatives to coca cultivation. The program also supports the goals of the September 18, 2008, U.S.-Colombia Memorandum of Understanding to Advance Cooperation on Renewable and Clean Energy signed by Secretary of State Rice and Colombian Foreign Minister Jaime Bermudez. The continued sustainable development of Colombia's biofuels industry will assist Colombia in generating agricultural sector employment, reducing emissions and increasing its energy security. A speaker program on next generation biofuels will also directly support the increasing bilateral cooperation in this important sector.

¶6. (U) AUDIENCE: Speaker will primarily address private sector biofuels producers; policy-makers such as representatives from the Ministries of Agriculture, Environment, Energy, and Foreign Affairs; and scientific experts from the Colombian Institute of Science (Colciencias) and Colombian Institute for Agriculture (ICA).

¶7. (U) IIP PARTICIPATION: There will be no IIP participation in this program.

¶8. (U) LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS: Fluent Spanish strongly preferred

¶9. (U) POST CONTACT INFORMATION: Program officer would be Deputy Economic Counselor William Popp. Email address: poppww@state.gov; Telephone number: 011-57-383-2780; Unclassified fax: 011-571-383-2053; Cell phone number: 310-478-4669.
NICHOLS